

From: Neil Rotstan
To: Microsoft ATR
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Subject: Microsoft Settlement

To whom it may concern:

As a co-founder of a small computer and network services company, which primarily maintains networks, computers, software, and other related equipment for small businesses, it might appear that a market dominated by a single vendor would be in our favor. After all, it would mean a common platform with well-known issues that my company could quickly become experienced with and skilled at troubleshooting or preventing.

However, we feel that such a situation is not at all to our advantage or, most importantly, that of our clients. Many small businesses have unique needs and very restricted budgets. Sure, it's the Microsofts, Fords, and Walmarts of the world that get all of the attention. But what really drives the business economy are the myriad small and home-base businesses operating on the hard-earned savings of a few individuals. For most of these, it's critical that they minimize the costs of their computing infrastructure while maximizing its benefit, usefulness, and performance. And let's face it: the biggest vendor is rarely the cheapest or the best. Most of my clients want to utilize alternatives wherever possible, because they're usually cheaper and better--sometimes even free and superior. Competition in the market place not only provides a better opportunity for my clients to choose a configuration of hardware and software that works best for them, it also gives my company an opportunity to provide that service. It makes everybody happier all-around.

It's easy to believe that the effect of lack of competition in the software market is limited to software. But it's not: it's incredibly widespread, and very detrimental. Not only are consumers and small businesses deprived of choice, and not only is Microsoft given the opportunity to produce poorer software and charge higher prices, but it also turns services such as those offered by my company into mere commodities. After all, if everyone has the same computing configuration, and if everyone is an expert in it, then what difference does it make who does the work? Viable choices and alternatives let my company differentiate ourselves and make our clients happier in the process.

Most of all, competition benefits those who do decide to use Microsoft products exclusively. Because once people have a viable choice, and Microsoft recognizes this, then it must suddenly work to improve the quality, price, and attractiveness of its products--something it hasn't needed to for quite a while now.

I urge you to not allow Microsoft to walk away from this and continue business as usual. As technologies continue to integrate with each other and

our society, computing will become even more critical to the success and everyday life of businesses and consumers. No matter who creates the innovative products and services to bring it all to us, Microsoft will eventually note that it's profitable and leverage its monopolies to bully itself into the niche and smother the innovators and creative thinkers. And that's not good for anybody but Microsoft.

Thanks for your time,
Neil Rotstan